

Our stance on the use of chemicals

As a responsible conservation organisation with a concern for the wider environment, we are working towards eventually excluding the use of chemicals on our land throughout the UK.

We have mainly confined chemical use to the control of invasive species such as rhododendron which pose a threat to important native wildlife in ancient woodland or where grasses and noxious weeds threaten to overwhelm young trees on newly created woodland. Invaders tend to be less favoured by wildlife compared with the more varied plants which they threaten to displace. As far as animals are concerned, the use of chemicals is a last resort in meeting our legal obligations to control rabbits.

Now that all our 1,100-plus woods have been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council as meeting high environmental standards of care, we have a long term commitment to reduce and eventually eliminate chemical use.

In practice this means we have adopted a presumption against the use of chemicals in our woods and we systematically explore all non-chemical options first. If there is no other current alternative and we have to use chemicals, their application is carefully targeted and monitored. We will support research and development intended to improve organic methods of weed control, and reduce chemical use.